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ABSTRACT

The hypothesis of this 1982 study of retirees in the city of Windsor (Canada) is that retired persons with the fewest housing constraints should exhibit a more active leisure behavior pattern and a higher expression of life satisfaction. To obtain the retirees' socioeconomic and demographic profile data, life histories, freetime activity patterns and measures of life satisfaction levels, 120 interviews, stratified by location and housing type, were conducted. Results indicated that both location and dwelling type do appear to be related to quality of retirement. Residents of privately operated apartments were found to be the most active. Respondents from public housing units are less active in most of the leisure categories recorded. The accessibility of retirement housing to recreational opportunities does improve the quality of retirement life. Questions raised by the study which need further analysis include: What crucial dwelling and locational elements enhance real and perceived recreational opportunities? and, Does a change in housing environment influence the level of expectations and, thereby, perceptions of both quality of life and opportunities? (RM)

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ACCESSIBILITY, HOUSING, RECREATIONAL PARTICIPATION AND RETIREMENT LIFE SATISFACTION: SOME PRELIMINARY RESULTS

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The processes by which urban structures are shaped and their influence on human behaviour have long been of interest to planners and geographers. Of concern to this analysis is the extent to which urban structure, as measured by the location of a residential area, and dwelling form, influences the recreational behaviour of a stratum of society, specifically, retirees. In turn, are levels of retirement life satisfaction related to recreation/leisure time?

The urban structure, recreation-leisure patterns and quality of life relationships, is a concept of interest to those who are or expect to become involved in the planning for an aging society. Location and dwelling forms are elements of urban structure important to the elderly because they are a more cautious and less mobile group. Furthermore, as recreation/leisure activities are postulated to be related to satisfaction levels, the extent to which spatial forms constrain or encourage participation may have some bearing on the quality of life.

This analysis is therefore focused on the assessment of whether retiree recreation/leisure activity rates are related to recreational accessibility as defined by housing type and residential location. In turn the above data are compared with retirees expressed levels of life satisfaction to ascertain whether a linkage exists between freetime participation patterns, the urban structure and quality of life. The findings reported are the preliminary results from a 1982 study of retirees in the city of Windsor. In the context of this

report the terms retiree, elderly, aged and senior citizen are used interchangeably although it is recognized that the terms can and are at times defined differently.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical background of the study is drawn from earlier conceptualizations derived by Maslow (1968); Hägerstrand (1970); and Chapin (1974). Recreational participation is seen as a means whereby the underlying set of needs postulated by Maslow may be fulfilled. The fulfillment process is thought to enhance life satisfaction (Tinsley, Barret and Kass 1977). Ragheb (1980) has demonstrated that participation in leisure activities has a stronger effect on life satisfaction than income, age, occupation and length of marriage. Leisure activities are thus seen as enabling individuals to meet their physical, creative, social and artistic needs. Of these it is speculated that the social environment may play the most important role in the development of quality of life. Within the social environment framework both on-site (at or in the dwelling) and off site elements need to be considered. More emphasis has been given to on site factors (Audain 1973). Less is known about the linkages between off site opportunities and retiree leisure activity patterns.

One view is that activity patterns are determined by notions of spatial opportunities (Chapin, 1974). Behaviour may also be dictated by individual, societal and coupling constraints (Hägerstrand, 1970).

It would be reasonable to expect that as individuals age they would slowly lose their ability to cope with the environment (individual, societal and coupling constraints). Thus it is hypothesized that as aging progresses environmental influences will tend to increase in significance as compared to socioeconomic variables as predictors of individual leisure time behaviour. The above process would be one explanation why the expected positive relationship between retirement life satisfaction and socioeconomic profiles has not been established in the literature (Cutler, 1982; Leonard, 1982; Ragheb, 1980).

The thesis of this study is that retirement life satisfaction, leisure behaviour and accessibility (or constraints) are interwoven. However, retirees become less able through decreased mobility to maximize residential locations. For certain categories of retirees, society at large increasingly determines the leisure opportunities. It is therefore postulated that retirees with the fewest housing constraints should exhibit a more active leisure behaviour pattern and a higher expression of life satisfaction.

Study Area and Methodology

The data are obtained from retirees residing in Windsor, Ontario -- an industrial center of some 200,000 inhabitants. The city was selected because it has one of the highest percentages of population age 55 and over in Canada. The change in the demographic structure has been a dramatic one for Windsor due to the collapse of the auto

industry. Between 1970 and 1980 the age group 50 years and older has increased by twenty-two percent and now comprises 26.7 percent of the population (Woods Gordon, 1982). Windsor is now having to adjust its planning philosophy from one emphasing planning for children orientated families to one which can also accomodate the more elderly households' needs for housing and recreational services. These needs are not only related to low income senior households but also the more affluent retirees.

Retirement, particularly for those residing in duplexes or detached homes, may be a dilemma. Does one choose between the physical labour required to maintain a property in a familiar neighbourhood or should one move to a more suitable dwelling but in an unknown territory? Income levels often dictate the quality of a retirement unit and whether it is publicly or privately operated. This raises the question of how do the retirement housing choices (private home, public and private run apartment units) compare with respect to their locational attributes, particularly recreational/leisure opportunities.

The data gathering process consisted of several steps. First, a ten percent sample of the retirees listed in the City of Windsor Occupation Directory was drawn and mapped. This base map was overlain with another map on which the existing and proposed public open space, parks and senior citizen community facilities were demarcated. Retirees socioeconomic and demographic profile data, life histories,

freetime activity patterns and measures of life satisfaction levels were obtained through personal interviews. One hundred and twenty interviews stratified by location (inner city, inner and outer suburbs) and housing type (detached, private and public operated apartment units) were collected. Retirement life satisfaction was measured using both the Neugartin index (Neugartin, Havighurst and Tobin, 1961) and a semantic differential scale. Information on retirees' perceptions of open space opportunities and leisure activity constraints were also gathered. The collected data were then tabulated to ascertain if leisure activity participation rates were related to housing type and city location and whether in turn these variables had a distribution pattern similar to that derived for life satisfaction levels.

Analysis

Retirees in Windsor are fairly uniformly distributed (Figure 1) with the exception of some clusters in the downtown and eastern sections of the city. A comparison of the location of existing and proposed public recreational facilities with the pattern of retiree residences reveals that the two sets of points are not synchronized. Residents of the inner city have a less favourable location with regard to public outdoor recreation facilities as compared to retirees in the suburbs. The situation with respect to indoor community facilities is reversed.

The availability of public open space and related facilities is in part a legacy of past planning policies and practices and is therefore not unexpected. Of note is the evidence that proposed parks will not significantly alter the spatial distribution of open space, a possible reflection that society deems that land rents are too high for recreational uses. Yet planning policy is to rejuvenate the downtown by the encouragement of the construction of family and senior citizen apartment units. This decreases open space on a per capita basis even more. Senior citizen centers only partially offset the differences in park facilities especially if the green space surrounding detached units is factored in (front, side and rear yards).

Since apartment units are located generally in the inner city, the observed differences with regard to open space areas and community centers obviously correlate with housing types. This is one of the trade offs that individuals, residing in a detached dwelling and contemplating a move to an apartment unit after retirement must make.

Differences also exist between private and publicly operated apartment units, a reflection of the rental market each type caters to. The majority of the public senior citizen housing units are geared to specific income levels and were constructed on the basis of costs related to rents. In general, parks located near public housing are small, four to five acres in size and they fulfill a variety of life cycle needs. At maximum, public housing residents have access to two parks within a quarter mile radius. Residents of privately owned

apartments have a better location with regard to public open space. This locational advantage is a function of competition and rents charged.

The most popular freetime activities (those mentioned by at least ten percent of the households interviewed) are listed by frequency of participation (Table 1); by residential location and type of dwelling (Table 2). Passive pursuits including television viewing, listening to the radio and reading are most common. Media orientated activities may be providing a secondary link to the outside world. Ten activities provide direct contact with the social environment (i.e., shopping, attending religious ceremonies or playing bingo). Three activities are physically orientated.

When the participation rates from Table 1 were disaggregated by location and dwelling form, the resultant variance was less than expected. Residents of private apartments and detached housing were the most active. Accessibility does appear to play a significant role in a retiree's pattern of free time behaviour. Hägerstrands theory of constraints seems to be borne out by the public housing activity data. The participation rates were checked for age and gender effect but no statistically significant differences were found among the categories. Neither did a cursory examination reveal significant differences in activity patterns by city location. The evidence suggests that it is not a particular city location nor

TABLE 1

Types of Activities Retirees Participate

In And How Often They do Them

Activity	%	Frequency (most likely answer)
Shopping	87	once a week
Watch TV	80	8-10 hrs/wk
Listen to radio	70	4-6 hrs/wk
Read	70	1-3 hrs/wk
Go to a religious ceremony	61	once a week
See someone for medical care	46	once or twice a year
Woodwork/sewing	36	1-3 hrs/wk
Go for walks	36	3-5/wk
Go to parks	35	once/mth
Play bingo/cards	34	4/mth
Plant care/garden	33	1 hr/wk
Cook/bake	26	1 hr/wk
Go to a community center	20	4/mth
Chat on the phone	14	15/mth
Go for drives	14	once or twice/mth
Bowl/golf	11	2-3 hrs/wk
Exercise	10	3-4/mth

Source: Questionnaire

TABLE 2

Comparison Of Activities Retirees Participate In

By Type of Residence

Activity	Single Detached (%)	Private Apartment (%)	Public Apartment (%)
Shopping	83	93	86
Watch TV	91	72	64
Listen to radio	76	72	41
Read	72	80	55
Go to a religious ceremony	63	70	47
See someone for medical care	42	50	50
Woodwork/sewing	35	41	33
Go for walks	30	20	13
Go to parks	30	60	16
Play bingo/cards	22	26	66
Plant care/garden	50	29	10
Cook/bake	25	33	20
Go to a community center	8	40	17
Chat on the phone	5	13	26
Go for drives	10	26	10
Bowl/golf	10	20	3
Exercise	8	6	16

Source: Questionnaire

dwelling type but neighbourhood opportunities that influence participation rates.

The satisfaction ratings do not correspond exactly with the participation data. Households from detached housing have the highest rankings on the Neugartin index (Table 3), while the two groups of apartment dwellers have very similar levels of satisfaction. Of interest is that downtown residents presumably from detached homes also expressed high levels of satisfaction. The relationship between life satisfaction levels and leisure participation rates is not clarified.

Data on the retirees perception of their accessibility to recreational-leisure facilities (Table 4) conform reasonably well with reality. Although public housing residents do see their free time opportunities in a better light than their counterparts in detached dwellings. The perception findings are not related to the activity data obtained for the public housing group but these perceptions may provide a clue why this group has a higher than expected level of satisfaction. If perceptions are linked to expectations and if residents of public housing have the lowest expectations of these groups, then the noted variance may be accounted for. This would follow the findings of Glatzer and Volkert (1977) who noted that older Germans had lower expectations than their younger counterparts but they had higher levels of satisfaction.

Little success was achieved in ascertaining which barriers if any

TABLE 3

Comparison Of Retirees Life Satisfaction Levels

By Urban Location and Type of Dwelling

	Levels of Life Satisfaction Index (0-36)			
	17-20	21-25	26-30	31-36
Urban Location	%	%	%	%
Downtown		5	54	42
Inner City	3	12	42	43
Outer City	4	8	46	42
Type of Residence				
Single Detached	2	5	48	45
Private Apartment	3	17	40	40
Public Apartment	3	14	43	40

Source: Questionnaire

TABLE 4

Retirees Perception of How Convenient Recreational Facilities are in respect to their Residence

Scale		Single Detached (%)	Private Apartment (%)	Public Apartment (%)
Convenience to Community Center				
Very convenient	(1)	18	46	46
	(2)	28	20	13
Ok	(3)	36	30	23
	(4)	15	3	13
Very far	(5)	2	0	3
Convenience to parks				
Very convenient	(1)	52	83	60
	(2)	25	16	10
Ok	(3)	18	0	16
	(4)	5	0	13
Very far	(5)	0	0	0
Convenience to all Recreational facilities				
Very convenient	(1)	30	63	53
	(2)	38	27	17
Ok	(3)	28	10	13
	(4)	2	0	13
Very far	(5)	2	0	3

Source: Questionnaire

existed that prevented one from participating in free time pursuits. Seventy-eight percent of the households could not or would not state a reason. Of the reasons given, poor health (11 .6 percent of the response) was the most frequently mentioned.

Discussion and Conclusions

In general, Windsorites have preferred to retire in neighbourhoods with which they are familiar. This is evident in the wide distribution of retirees throughout the city. Notwithstanding this preference some of the elderly have opted for apartment accommodation provided by both the public and private sectors. Reasons for this decision are many but undoubtedly the burden of home maintenance and/or income difficulties played major roles, the latter with regard to movement to public housing.

The stimulus for public housing arose out of the need for society to cope with the growing number of the elderly who had insufficient funds for housing, in part due to the lack of adequate retirement pension plans during the labour force participation period. Public housing was also seen as a means of rejuvenating downtown core areas which had declined as the result of the suburbanization process. Along with public housing came senior citizen centers. An argument for the location of public housing downtown was the notion of enhancing the elderly's accessibility to a number of services and facilities. This notion may have been correct in the pre 1960's. The accessibility

argument is only partially true in the context of Windsor, where the malls and medical centers have moved away from the downtown.

Downtown areas have normally had a shortage of park space (Parkland Dedication, 1980). This is particularly true of Windsor which has an overall shortage of park space. Consequently, the emphasis on public housing in the downtown core without additional open space has only aggravated the problem of insufficient accessible green "open" space in the inner city. Furthermore, the parks that are available must accommodate a number of functions and cannot cater just to the needs of the elderly.

Privately provided apartments rent to a wider clientele. Unhampered to the same extent by income restrictions as public housing, private apartment locations offer a variety of choices. In general, private apartments have opted for locations near major transport networks and physically attractive areas (along the Detroit River and near parks). The result has been that public housing residents are closer to senior center facilities while residents who own homes or rent from the private market have better access to open space.

Physical accessibility to different types of facilities did not correspond entirely with the recorded levels of life satisfaction. Downtown retirees had the higher scores. However, it should be noted that when life satisfaction values were aggregated by house type the highest values are found for single detached dwellings. The results

indicate that both location and dwelling type do appear to be related to quality of retirement. However, it is not clear what particular dwelling and locational attributes come into play as barriers to participation could not be identified.

The data suggest that social and personal-passive elements as well as physical ones comprise leisure activity. Senior citizens require both privacy and social interaction during their daily/weekly cycles. This is perceived to be best provided by accommodations in private residences near the downtown.

Residents of privately operated apartments were found to be the most active. However, a comparison with dwellers of single detached residences cannot be fully made as home maintenance activities were not included in the list of recreational activities. What is clear is that respondents from public housing units are less active in most of the leisure categories recorded. Participation rates appear to be related to recreational opportunities and to some extent to expressed rates of life satisfaction. The latter point is not clear, however, when comparing the two groups of apartment dwellers; it needs to be pursued further in conjunction with the possible influences of perception and expectations. This may shed some light on the reasons why public housing residents perceived their accessibility to park space to be within similar parameters as their counterparts from single detached units.

Additional information on barriers to participation may have allowed for futrue insight on the questions raised above. However, it was difficult to elicit responses in this area. The lack of response to the questions concerning why an individual did not participate is not clear. It could be a function of the inability of the respondent to clearly establish and express the motives for nonparticipation. Or the questions presented could have been seen as an invasion of privacy. Methods of gathering data on the processes involved in decision making need to be pursued in greater depth.

In conclusion, accessibility of retirement housing to recreational opportunities is related to quality of retirement life as measured by leisure participation rates, and to some extent by life satisfaction levels. The evidence suggests that an ideal residential area is one that facilitates both private and group interaction. Unanswered issues include what crucial dwelling and locational elements enhance real and perceived recreational opportunities? Another question concerns the role of expectations. Does a change in housing environment influence the level of expectations and thereby perceptions of both quality of life and opportunities? The study has raised questions for further analysis and this is an indication of the early stage of research on the Canadian aged.

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